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ABSTRACT

In fall 1983, Dutchess Community College (DCC), Poughkeepsie, New York, implemented a strategic planning process which ultimately resulted in the development of short- and long-range marketing plans. The initial marketing approach began in spring 1985 and was directed toward a pilot project to affect summer 1985 enrollments utilizing a market segmentation approach. The project involved sending personalized letters to students who had been attending college elsewhere, encouraging them to enroll at their low-cost neighborhood community college during the upcoming summer and transfer the courses back to their present institutions. The study involved a control group consisting of all 2,351 graduates of county high schools during 1984-85, and an experimental group composed of 1,887 freshman, sophomore, and junior students attending colleges other than DCC. Members of both groups received the same letter describing the summer session as well as a direct response inquiry card which could be used to obtain more information. After the completion of the summer session, college registration lists were compared with the names of students in the control and experimental groups, revealing that 6% of the experimental group and 3% of the control group registered for the summer term. Based on study findings, it was decided to expand the targeted marketing approach for the following summer. The study report includes a review of the literature on educational marketing. (RO)

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Impact Measures For A Marketing Intervention Strategy At A Two Year College

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Abstract

Community colleges, particularly in the Northeast, have in recent years begun to experience organizational decline. To strengthen lagging enrollments, many institutions have embraced "quick fix" marketing solutions. For marketing to have any long-run effect on an institution, it must be linked to the institution as a whole...to its planning, curriculum and scheduling. Most important, it must provide measurable indicators of impact. This paper describes an attempt by one community college to apply an impact sensitive market intervention strategy utilizing a relatively low cost approach: segmented, targeted mailing.

Impact Measures For A Marketing Intervention Strategy At A Two Year College

Introduction

The American Council of Education indicates that, during 1984-85, enrollments in two year colleges declined by 4 percent from the previous year. In contrast, enrollments in four year institutions remained stable. As for the future, the Department of Education, among others, projects further declines by the end of the decade (Saunders, 1986).

After years of rapid expansion, public community colleges have begun in recent years to experience decline, particularly those in the nation's northeast. This decline is centered around the loss of both the traditional eighteen to twenty year-old full-time student and the older male and female part-timers (Centra, 1980).

All too often, the response to these shifts in participation patterns is to move to greater expenditures in advertising, promotion, program retrenchment, and short-term marketing activities (often isolated from other major college actions). More often than not, these solutions center around what are perceived as "quick fix" problem solving.

To have any long run effect on an institution, enrollment management strategies, including educational marketing, must be linked through a comprehensive planning process to the characteristics of the organization and be able to provide measurable indicators of impact.

This paper centers around one community college's attempt to apply a market intervention strategy resulting from a

comprehensive planning process and utilizing some limited impact measures which demonstrate the effectiveness of institutionally-based, segmented, targeted mailing.

The Problem

Zammuto (1983) has noted that there has been, in organizational theories in general and in educational management specifically, an assumption of growth. Decline has been viewed as temporary and abnormal. As a result of this viewpoint, there exists little in the way of a theoretical framework or an organized body of research devoted to organizational decline.

For the professional manager in community college higher education, the situation is particularly perilous. In addition to lack of theory and research, he/she has experiences grounded solely in the last few decades of growth and expansion.

The initial responses to decline have taken the form of task forces which have inevitably recommended intensified recruitment, sophisticated marketing campaigns, comprehensive outreach programs, etc. (Kreutner, P.7).

When such actions have failed to halt decline, sterner procedures follow. Starbuck (1978) indicates that continued decline produces movements to increase efficiency leading to increased centralization, short term planning, and contracted lines of communication. All of these are the very opposite of growth conditions and, thus, further decline is reinforced.

The Model

Over a half century ago, the German political sociologist, Max Weber, identified abstract categories into which most systems

authority could be placed. They were legal domination (bureaucracy), traditional domination (monarchy), charismatic domination (dictatorship) (Bendix, pp. 297-299). A contemporary of Weber's, Emile Durkheim, was to add a fourth element: Anomie or normlessness, a state where no system of authority existed. (Durkheim, pp. 386-392). Thus, an initial model (Table 1) takes form consisting of a matrix with four cells, each describing a kind of organization distinguished from the others by a unique system of authority.

Table 1

Organizational Types

Traditional	Anomie
Bureaucracy	Charismatic

Whetten (1983) has traced the evolution of similar four fold typologies as applied to organizations among many contemporary organizational theorists including Downs (1967), Scott (1971), and Katz & Kahn (1978). Most notable has been the work of Charles Perrow (1967). Perrow distinguished organizations into four types based upon technology (work done by the organization). Table 2 illustrates his four classifications.

Table 2

Perrow Modifications

Craft Industries	Non-Routine
Routine	Engineering

Additionally, Whetten (1983) has taken the four fold typology and linked it to the concept of organizational life cycle. He maintains that an organization including a college or university changes in structure. The various possibilities are presented in Table 3 in the form of a four fold typology.

Table 3

Organizational Lifestyles

Collectivity	Elaboration of Structure
Formalization & Control	Entrepreneurial

Further, he maintains that the transitions among stages occur when there is a mismatch among environmental demands, institutional attributes, and strategies being pursued. Most important, then, the knowledge of an organization's stage of development may be a key in determining the effectiveness of any intervention strategy.

The work of Zammuto (1982) brings further refinement to the four fold typology, applying it to educational organizations including community colleges. Table 4 envisions four types of educational organizations based on the likely type of relationship each would have with its environment producing a unique set of change factors applicable to each of the four kinds. The two defining variables for the typology are the niche (defined service area and level of resources) and the continuity of change resulting from an interaction between the environment and the educational organization. In the case of the former, a niche can either change in size becoming bigger/smaller or change its shape requiring a different product and/or set of resources. The second variable, continuity of environmental change, refers to whether the change is continuous or discontinuous with past organizational experiences.

Table 4

Types of Educational Organizations

	Continuous Change	Discontinuous Change
Change in Niche Size	Doctoral University	Two Year College
Change in Niche Shape	General Baccalaureate College	Specialist College

In a final step, Zammuto (1983) links in Table 5 each of the four educational, organizational types to a more likely successful intervention strategy given the source of change.

Table 5

Types of Intervention Strategies

Doctoral University Decline Type - Erosion Response - Minor realignment	Two Year College Decline Type - Contraction Response - Reconstruction
Baccalaureate College Decline Type - Dissolution Response - Expansion	Specialist College Decline Type - Collapse Response - Experimentation

Based on the four fold analysis, both universities and two year colleges are faced with a simple reduction in services and/or resources. Universities have experienced these circumstances before and will again. Community colleges, on the other hand, have had a past history of continuous expansion. While both types of institutions can plan a response to decline, the community college must face not only an inconsistent past history, but a susceptability to fluctuating factors such as economic conditions. With a localized student pool and discontinuities in the supply of students, two year colleges must assume market intervention strategies that call for drastic measures to reconstruct their educational programs. Universities, on the other hand, with broad ranges of program offerings and funding not directly tied to formulae sensitive to enrollment changes, can focus on fine-tuning and modifications to existing programs.

In contrast to universities and two year colleges, baccalaureate and specialist institutions lack the diversity of programs. When change occurs, it will be more likely to lead to a shift in the niche, resulting in mission change. Where the change is continuous, providing limited time for prior planning as in the case of liberal arts colleges, expansion into new areas such as graduate education (M.B.A. programs) may be possible. For the specialist schools such as colleges of divinity or dentistry, the suddenness of declines leaves only experimentation as a strategy to cope with the collapse of service demand and/or resources (Zammuto, pp. 99-105).

Market Intervention and the Community College

Based on the model as presented, community colleges seeking to cope with enrollment declines should be able to successfully employ marketing strategies if such approaches are geared to major program, curriculum, scheduling, and presentation reconstruction. Unlike specialist institutions, such changes should be possible for two year colleges without any alteration of mission. Consistent with the logic of the four fold typology, sound enrollment strategies and the marketing research supporting them must be sensitive to the condition of the market, the need for the organization's product, and the nature of the organization itself. Litten (1980) has most succinctly summarized the goal of educational marketing research as "a frame of mind in which questions are asked about optimum relationship between an organization and its environment, or parts of its environment, and action is taken that is informed by the answers to those questions" (p. 41). In other words, good market research leads to the establishment of a "fit" between a college and its environment.

It becomes particularly important for small institutions, including many community colleges with limited resources, to develop institutionally-based, low cost market intervention strategies linked to a planning process. One such strategy involves the use of marketing segmentation analysis. Kotler (1975) describes segmentation as consisting of "dividing the market into fairly homogenous parts where any part may conceivably be selected as a market target to be reached with a distinctive marketing mix" (p. 99).

A Pilot Project

Dutchess Community College, a component of the State University of New York, implemented in the Fall of 1983 a strategic planning process which ultimately resulted in the development of short and long range marketing plans. The effort was distinguished from "quick fix" approaches in its

- calling for management restructuring
- developing of an expanded applicant data base
- leading to curriculum reexamination
- initiating organizational development activities.

The initial marketing approach began in the Spring of 1985 and was directed toward a pilot project to impact 1985 summer school enrollments utilizing a market segmentation approach. Most important, attempts were made to develop measures of effectiveness which could be used later to shape more expanded efforts.

The pilot plan was a variation of one utilized at Metropolitan Community College District and described by Keim (1981). In it, MCCD obtained the names and home addresses of 5,800 students who lived within the district, but who had been attending the first two years elsewhere. Personalized letters were sent during the spring to those students at their home addresses which encouraged them to enroll at their low-cost neighborhood community colleges during the upcoming summer and transfer the courses back to their present institutions.

Methodology

While the summer session targeted by the MCCD plan had a 24 percent higher enrollment than the previous summer, Keim

provided no measurable data to confirm the impact of the segmented mailing technique.

Our concern at Dutchess Community College was not simply to replicate the mailing, but to also develop measures of the effectiveness of this low cost, institutionally-based, planned marketing strategy.

The measures were based on the simplest of quasi-experimental designs employing a control and experimental group (Table 6). The control group consisted of all 2,351 graduates of county high schools during 1984-85. The experimental group was composed of a list of freshman, sophomore, and junior students totalling 1887 who were attending colleges other than Dutchess during the 1984-85 academic year, but who were residents of Dutchess or Putnam (an adjoining county). Members of both groups received the same letter describing the summer session as well as a direct response inquiry card which could be used to obtain more information.

Table 6

Static-Group Comparison

X O_1 (College Attendees)

O_2 (High School Grads)

The significant difference between the two groups is that, in the case of the control group, all members received a letter independent of whether their future plans included higher education. This form of mass mailing is similar to what many community colleges presently do. The experimental group, on the

other hand, was selected from a commercial mailing house on the basis of likely attendance criteria including present college attendance, residence, and the common appeal to take summer electives transferable back to their home institutions. This experimental group constituted an identifiable market segment susceptible to a specific approach.

The objective, then, was to show that a segmented marketing approach could be more effective than mass mailings for a community college wishing to expand its summer program.

Results

After the completion of the 1985 summer session, college registration lists were matched against the names contained in both groups using a computerized matching program. In addition, general summer school student characteristics were collected and compared with those of previous summer sessions using a survey instrument that had been employed in prior years.

Table 7 displays the major differences in enrollment characteristics between the Summer '84 and Summer '85 student body. While the 1985 enrollment was down 11.2%, two categories were considerably less negative than the others: sophomore students and non-matriculated attenders (no major at Dutchess). If impact were to occur, these would be the categories affected by an increase in students from other colleges attending the Dutchess summer session.

Table 7

Overall Comparisons Between Summer '84 and Summer '85

Student Characteristics	Summer 1984 Headcount	Summer 1985 Headcount	% Change
Headcount			
Males	1069	939	-12.2%
Females	1588	1419	-10.6%
Total	2657	2358	-11.2%
Status By Sex			
Freshmen Males	692	587	-15.2%
Freshmen Females	986	823	-16.5%
Sophomore Males	377	352	- 6.6%
Sophomore Females	602	596	- 1.0%
Total	2657	2358	-11.2%
Degree/Certificate			
A.A.S.	940	730	-22.3%
A.A.	186	187	+ 0.5%
A.S.	481	406	-15.6%
Certificate	22	12	-45.4%
Non-Matriculated	1028	1023	- 0.5%
Total	2657	2358	-11.2%

Among the questions routinely asked of students attending the summer session, two are particularly relevant to the question at hand: educational status during the previous spring and projected educational status for the coming fall. In Table 8, note that the number of students enrolled at another college in the

previous spring, as well as those projecting enrollment at another college in the fall had increased from the Summer of '84 to the Summer of '85. These again are good secondary indicators of possible impact.

Table 8

Summer Student Survey

	Summer 1984	Summer 1985
Educational Status During Previous Spring		
Enrolled full-time at DCC	31%	32%
Enrolled part-time at DCC	26%	24%
Enrolled at another college full or part-time	22%	24%
Enrolled in high school	5%	6%
Not involved in education	16%	14%
Projected Educational Status for Coming Fall		
Enrolled full-time at DCC	31%	32%
Enrolled part-time at DCC	32%	27%
Enrolled at another college or university	28%	33%
Attend high school	2%	2%
Not involved in education	7%	6%

The primary indicator of impact can be found in Table 9 which describes the results of the list matching program. Essentially, a larger number of students from the segmental mailing (the experimental group) enrolled at Dutchess than from the control group containing a larger N and consisting of all high school graduates.

Table 9

List Matching

1. Six per cent or 107 of the students contacted from the commercial list ultimately enrolled at Dutchess for the 1985 summer school. This 6% was from an N of 1887.
2. In contrast, only 3% or 66 students contacted from the all high school graduate list ultimately enrolled at Dutchess for the 1985 summer school. This 3% was from an N of 2351.

Interpretation and Conclusion

Marketing is at best an inexact art and no pretense is made at rigorous statistical testing of hypotheses. Rather, the focus of concern in this paper has been around the central concept that a marketing intervention strategy for a college must be linked to the characteristics of the organization, particularly environment, unique to the various types of institutions. Such linkages are revealed through a comprehensive planning process as opposed to "quick fix" activities. Most important, a planned intervention makes possible the development of impact measures which can point to the success or failure of the venture.

In the case of Dutchess Community College, the secondary and primary impact indicators point to success despite an overall loss in enrollment. As a result, the college has planned an expanded effort for Summer 1986 which includes

- an expanded summer program linked to preferences expressed by 85 attendees from other institutions
- a specialized brochure describing the expanded summer

offerings

- a more personalized letter to residents attending other institutions during the year
- a special telephone/mail registration to be coordinated with the Spring break, allowing for an early summer school decision.

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